

HP fires up in network battle with Cisco

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Touts standards-based 'third wave' of networking.

A month after its acquisition of 3Com, HP's networking division has Cisco firmly in its sights.

In February, the two companies [ended a partnership](#) that spanned nearly 20 years when Cisco decided not to renew HP's contract as a Systems Integrator.

Now HP hopes to lead what it calls the "third wave of networking": standards-based technology focused on service delivery.

At the NetEvents conference in Singapore today, HP's senior director of networking Jay Mellman described HP's plan to bring together networking technology that is currently siloed .

"The basic nature of enterprise networking is about to change," he said. "Tomorrow's IT is going to be built on a converged infrastructure."

Mellman joined HP in June 2009 after four years as Cisco's director of market management.

While he admitted that Cisco has led the networking market for the past decade, he believed that the Cisco-led "second wave of networking" of Ethernet consolidation was at an end.

"How has the job of a network admin changed in the past 10 years? It's pretty much the same," he said.

"We need a new approach to networking; it needs to be standards based. We believe we can enable a network admin to become more productive."

A panel of speakers from IDC, Infoblox and Spirent Communications agreed that networking technology was not yet advanced enough to enable the full benefits of virtualisation.

Manageability emerged as an issue: Richard Kagan, executive VP and GM of Infoblox said Microsoft Excel was still the most commonly used network management tool today.

"There's a big gap between the level of automation available for a server environment than a networking environment," Kagan said.

"Products like VMWare's VSphere have done a great job around virtual servers, but we're still managing networks today in the same way we've done ten years ago."

"The only advantage we can get [from virtualisation] today is more [server] utilisation, but we're not getting flexibility and strategic advantages. It's the network that's the bottleneck."

Mellman hoped that HP's position as a multifaceted IT company would lend it to improving networking from server, storage and management software perspectives.

He said HP would extend 3Com's networking market leadership in China worldwide.

"Do we want to be the leading end-to-end networking provider? Yes. Do we want to model ourselves on Cisco? No," he said.

"What we're doing is taking what made 3Com so successful in China and applying it to the rest of the world. The game has changed; because of the breadth of what HP can offer, we believe that we're best place to meet customer needs."